George explaining to a delegation of Chinese engineers visiting COMSAT, his original concept of streaming, on-demand, downloadable music and video,

Thomas Oberlin
tomsoberlin@gmail.com
(703) 969 3142
Apr 6, 2026

What if, in 1984—before the internet, before streaming, before even the personal computer became commonplace—someone had already figured out how music would one day be delivered directly to consumers, on demand, without physical media?
And not only imagined it—but built it so others could see it, hear it, and experience it?
I witnessed that.
From 1983 through 1985, I worked at Satellite Television Corporation, a division of COMSAT, in Washington, D.C., where I worked with George Daly.
To understand the significance of what I am about to describe, you have to place yourself in that moment in time.
Ronald Reagan was President. The breakup of AT&T had just begun reshaping the communications landscape. MTV was still new, redefining music through broadcast television. The industry was driven entirely by physical distribution—vinyl records and the rapidly growing compact disc.

Artists like Michael Jackson and bands like Van Halen dominated the charts. Music was something you bought, held, and played. The idea that it could be delivered instantly, remotely, on demand—without a physical product—was not just unbuilt. It was barely conceived.

Then came March 1984, at the NARM Record Label Convention 1984 at the Diplomat Hotel in Hollywood, Florida.

I watched George Daly engage senior music industry executives in a conversation that, at the time, must have sounded almost abstract: the idea that their catalogs could generate entirely new revenue streams by being distributed directly to consumers via satellite.

But George understood something critical—something most people miss when introducing new ideas.

He knew that people do not grasp the future by hearing about it. They grasp it when they experience it.

He understood the difference between intellectual acknowledgment and emotional conviction—and he focused on closing that gap.

So he didn't just describe the future.

He built it.

George conceptualized and developed and built a fully interactive simulation of a satellite-based audio and video distribution system. He then conceived and commissioned a prototype: the Personal Satellite Receiver 2000, an infrared-controlled, PC-driven interface connected to a user's television, with content delivered via laserdisc. Users could navigate it, interact with it, and experience something that, for all practical purposes, did not yet exist—on-demand access to unlimited music and video.

This was years before Napster. Years before the iPod. Years before streaming became the global, dominant model.

What George Daly did was not simply predict the future.

He made it real—early enough that others could feel it.

And that is what I witnessed firsthand.

Sincerely,

Thomas S. Oberlin